

*Printed for the War Cabinet. February 1940.***SECRET.****Copy No. 48****W.M. (40)****31st Conclusions.****TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.**

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WAR CABINET 31 (40).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Friday, February 2, 1940, at 5.30 P.M.

Present :

The Right Hon. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., Prime Minister (<i>in the Chair</i>).	
The Right Hon. Sir JOHN SIMON, K.C., M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.	The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HALIFAX, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
The Right Hon. Sir SAMUEL HOARE, Bt., M.P., Lord Privy Seal.	Admiral of the Fleet the Right Hon. LORD CHATFIELD, Minister for Co- ordination of Defence.
The Right Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty.	The Right Hon. OLIVER STANLEY, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, M.P., Secretary of State for Air.	The Right Hon. LORD HANKEY, Minister without Portfolio.

The following were also present :

The Right Hon. Sir JOHN ANDERSON, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security.	The Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P., Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
Sir HORACE J. WILSON, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury.	Admiral of the Fleet Sir DUDLEY POUND, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff.
General Sir W. EDMUND IRONSIDE, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.	Air Marshal R. E. C. PEIRSE, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff.

Secretariat.

Sir EDWARD BRIDGES.
Major-General H. L. ISMAY.
Lieutenant-Colonel V. DYKES, R.E.
Lieutenant-Colonel E. I. C. JACOB, R.E.

WAR CABINET 31 (40).

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Scandinavia.

(Previous
References:
W.M. (40) 26th
Conclusions,
Minute 7, and
W.M. (40) 28th
Conclusions,
Minute 8.)

1. The War Cabinet had before them—

- (a) A report by the Chiefs of Staff on the Scandinavian position (W.P. (40) 35).
- (b) A Report by the Chiefs of Staff on French proposals for Allied assistance to Finland (W.P. (40) 41).

The discussion on this item and the Conclusions reached are recorded in the Secretary's Standard File of War Cabinet Conclusions.

**Soviet-Finnish
Conflict.**

Proposed
seizure of
German
supplies to
U.S.S.R.

2. In connection with the discussion on the previous item, *The First Lord of the Admiralty* said that information had just been received that two large German merchant vessels loaded with munitions for the Russians were trying to work their way round to Murmansk through Norwegian territorial waters. They were said to be having difficulty in securing Norwegian pilots. Both of them were still south of the point on the Norwegian Coast where an interception could conveniently be made. The Admiralty had despatched a cruiser to investigate.

The First Lord pointed out that a very good case could be made for seizing these ships even in Norwegian territorial waters. They were engaged in helping Russia against Finland, whom both Norway and ourselves were bound by the recent resolution of the League of Nations to assist.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs thought that if the seizure of these ships could be carried out in not too blatant a manner he would be inclined to agree to it. He would like, however, further time to study the matter.

The War Cabinet agreed—

Subject to the concurrence of the Foreign Secretary, to authorise the Admiralty to take steps to intercept and seize the German ships reported to be travelling through Norwegian territorial waters to Murmansk, provided that, on investigation, it was found that they were carrying munitions, and that the interception could be made in an unobtrusive manner.

*Richmond Terrace, S.W. 1,
February 2, 1940.*